

In this issue:

- **ePayroll Initiative to Streamline Payroll Processing Government-Wide**
- **GovBenefits Celebrates One-Year Anniversary**
- **eGovernment Glossary**

ePayroll Initiative to Streamline Payroll Processing Government-Wide

ePayroll, one of the twenty-four Presidential eGovernment Initiatives, is a collaborative effort between the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and many Federal agencies, including USDA. The initiative's purpose is to consolidate, standardize, and modernize the Federal payroll system; it will reduce the current twenty-two Federal payroll providers to only four, eventually using one common system for nearly two million Federal employees.

By the end of 2004, two partnerships—one between USDA's National Finance Center (NFC) and the Interior Department's National Business Center, and another between the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the General Services Administration—will process payrolls for all Federal agencies and employees.

The new systems developed by ePayroll will provide significant benefits to employees and human resources personnel within USDA and across the Federal government. Specifically, the initiative will:

- Develop a framework to standardize the use of payroll data across the Federal government, to enable both system consolidation and improved use of payroll data;
- Improve information sharing between management and oversight functions, including performance management, budgeting, and financial management;
- Enable executives to make better decisions by providing more accurate, timely workforce and budget data;
- Promote Federal payroll policies and standards, and reduce risk; and
- Generate cost savings through economies of scale, streamlining operations to reduce operation and capital investment costs, and promoting standardization and unified service delivery

In all, OPM estimates that the increased efficiency of Federal payroll processing gained through consolidating and modernizing systems will yield approximately \$1.2 billion in savings over the next ten years.

The ePayroll initiative aligns with multiple components of the President's Management Agenda (PMA). The initiative utilizes uniform, modern systems that will integrate with other HR systems and increase ease-of-use for employees. It further supports the PMA's eGovernment goals by leveraging industry best practices and expertise across all Federal payroll providers. In addition to eGov-

ernment, ePayroll also supports the Strategic Management of Human Capital component of the PMA. First, Federal employees will be able to more quickly and easily manage payroll and other HR activities, thus improving their work environment. Second, the new ePayroll system will more easily facilitate interdepartmental employee details and transfers, administration of monetary awards, and other approaches designed to better support and utilize the Federal workforce.

"This is the biggest consolidation of payroll processing for any organization," Mark Forman, Administrator of eGovernment and Information Technology at the Office of Management and Budget. "We no longer will be the laggard; we will be the benchmark."

As one of only four Federal payroll providers selected by OPM through a rigorous, competitive process, USDA is playing a leading role in the ePayroll initiative. Initially, the NFC will serve a number of agencies across the Federal government, integrating the agencies' systems into a new, modern NFC payroll platform through FY 2004. Moving forward, NFC will work with the Interior Department to develop a fully integrated system to serve all Federal agencies aligned with the USDA/Interior processing partnership.

Effective implementation of ePayroll should have a significant positive impact on USDA by eliminating barriers to cross-agency communication and coordination, making existing systems more interoperable.

Indeed, USDA officials believe that ePayroll will deliver significant results. According to Jerry Lohfink, USDA's project manager for ePayroll, "USDA's Office of the Chief Financial Officer, National Finance Center is proud to be part of this important initiative. ePayroll is good business. The valuable results from this initiative could be a model for improving other administrative business areas."

For more information on USDA's participation in the ePayroll initiative, contact the eGovernment Team.

Seen and Heard

"Electronic government is becoming a reality, as our customers can increasingly conduct business with the Department online, saving both our customers and our employees time and money over the long term."

*Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman
at FY 2004 Budget Briefing*

GovBenefits.gov Celebrates Anniversary

GovBenefits, first of the twenty-four Presidential eGovernment initiatives to be launched to the public, is celebrating its first anniversary. The initiative is designed to make it easier for citizens to find information on obtaining government benefits by offering a single, integrated questionnaire to determine eligibility for hundreds of Federal programs. According to Dennis Egan, USDA lead for GovBenefits, "Whether it's a direct payment, a loan, insurance, training or other services, GovBenefits may be able to help find the program that is right for you." The site has proven extremely popular, receiving over three million visits in its first nine months of operation alone.

GovBenefits.gov has continued to improve over the past year and has been recognized for providing true value to citizens. Most recently, it was awarded the SecurE-Biz award, which recognizes leaders who have made the greatest strides towards advancing eBusiness transformation in support of the President's Management Agenda.

This month, GovBenefits.gov participated in the eTown pavilion at the FOSE Showcase, the largest information technology exposition serving government. The exhibit was a tremendous success, allowing increased exposure for GovBenefits. In addition, the GovBenefits.gov staff was on hand to provide demonstrations to interested attendees, as well as receive valuable feedback from people that stopped by the booth.

USDA's involvement has continued to expand over the past year, with the number of USDA programs available on the site rising from six to over thirty. Look forward to expanded content and functionality on the site soon.

eGovernment Glossary

For terms with an ⓘ symbol, more information is available through the source noted. Previous issues of the USDA eGovernment Newsletter are available for reference at www.egov.usda.gov.

Enterprise Architecture (EA). A strategic information asset base which defines an organization's mission, the information and technologies necessary to perform this mission, and the transitional processes for implementing new technologies in response to changing mission needs. This asset base includes a baseline architecture, a target architecture, and a sequencing plan. (As defined in eGovernment Act of 2002.) ⓘ *Federal Enterprise Architecture Program Management Office*, www.feapmo.gov.

President's Management Agenda. President Bush's management plan for Federal agencies providing a strategy for streamlining the management and performance of the Federal government. Its five major government-wide initiatives are Expanding Electronic Government, Budget and Performance Integration, Competitive Sourcing, Strategic Management of Human Capital, and Improving Financial Performance. ⓘ *Text available from OMB*.

Presidential eGovernment Initiatives. Twenty-four cross-agency initiatives designed to realize the eGovernment goals of the President's Management Agenda, namely citizen-centered delivery of services and improved efficiency through consolidation and streamlining of duplicative systems. ⓘ *eGovernment Newsletter*, Nov. 2002.

Government Paperwork Elimination Act (GPEA). Law requiring Federal agencies to, where practicable, give the public the option to submit information and forms and conduct other transactions electronically, by October 2003. ⓘ *Bill text available through the CIO Council*; additional information available from OMB.

eAuthentication. Suite of services and processes for verifying the identity of users conducting online transactions with USDA. In order to allow customers to interact as they would in a face-to-face environment, it is important to verify who they say they are. Specific methods for authenticating users will be chosen based on the risk associated with the electronic transactions the user will be able to perform. ⓘ *eGovernment Newsletter*, Dec. 2002.

eDeployment. Initiative implementing a common, enterprise-wide set of business processes and information technology tools. Encompasses five previously separate initiatives including Web Content Management, Document Management, Web Presence, Portal Services, and Data Management. ⓘ *eGovernment Newsletter*, Dec. 2002.

eLearning. Using the Internet and other eGovernment tools to deliver and manage training. Includes both Web-based and other electronic courses, as well as a learning management system (LMS) that enables employees, managers, and trainers to enroll in courses, track requirements and training progress, and handle administrative tasks such as cost accounting and training approvals. USDA's eLearning initiative includes an LMS (with the functionality described above), as well as coordinated purchasing of online training content to expand access and reduce cost. ⓘ *eGovernment Newsletter*, Dec. 2002.

eSignature. An electronic signature allows a user to "sign" an online transaction. It signals a person's consent, approval, or acknowledgement. An electronic signature can take many forms, such as a name typed at the end of an email message, a digitized image of a handwritten signature, or even a secret code or PIN that identifies the sender to the recipient; the method chosen depends on the level of assurance required.

For more information on any of these topics, or for general comments or questions, contact the eGovernment Team at:

- **Phone:** (202) 720-6144
- **eMail:** egov@usda.gov
- **Web:** www.egov.usda.gov